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THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART, TOLEDO, OHIO

A SMALL MUSEUM*

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

BY MRS. GEORGE W. STEVENS

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

TOLEDO is not a rich city nor yet a large one. Many other cities of the country of greater size and wealth and still without museums of arts should, in the natural course of events, have afforded their citizens the benefits of a museum long before Toledo. Before there were even dreams of a Toledo Museum of Art there had been bequeathed to two other Ohio cities large sums sufficient to build and maintain such institutions. These cities are to this day without museums of art, and as a consequence a generation or more of people have gone forth into life bereft of the benefits which an art museum is able to give to a community. It is quite

evident, therefore, that something else besides money is needed, this something else being intelligent and unremitting effort on the part of one person or a group of persons working in absolute harmony. The Toledo Museum of Art, if it accomplishes nothing more important, at least demonstrates to sister cities the possibility of creating a museum without bequests, endowments, maintenance fund or municipal support.

Some twelve years ago a hundred or more citizens agreed to give ten dollars a year each for the purpose of starting a Toledo Museum of Art. They did not make the mistake of calling themselves club, society or association, but took the

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THE WHITE CLOUD

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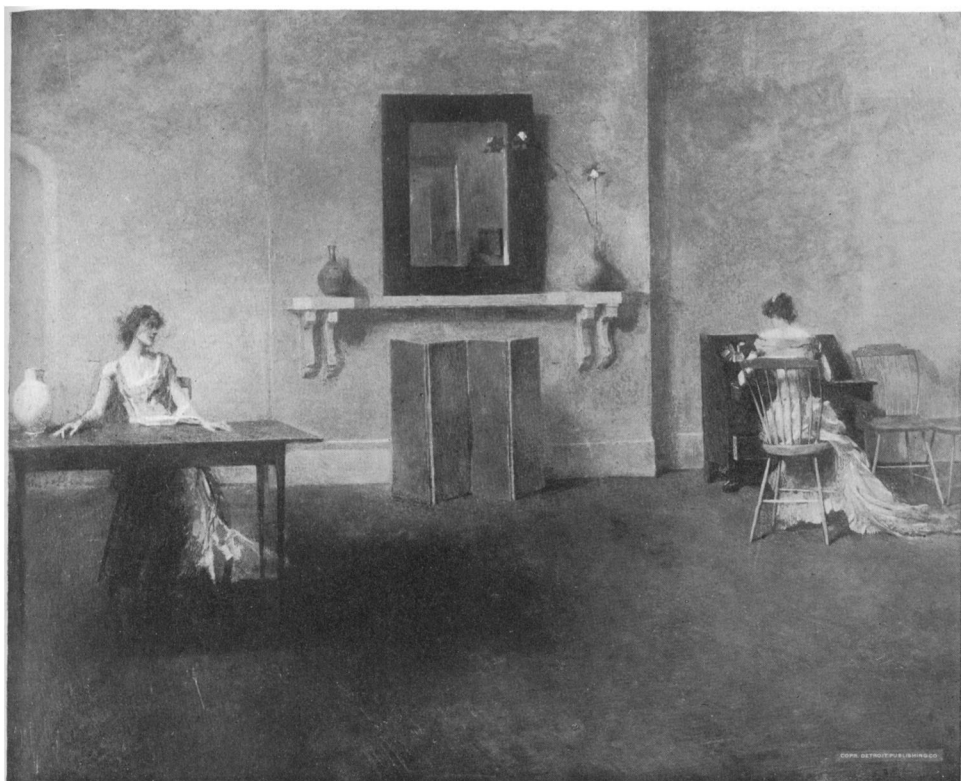
GEORGE ELMER BROWNE

name of the thing itself which they wished to create; and so this thing that had no existence other than a name had to be conjured forth into some tangible and visible form. An art association might have existed indefinitely performing its functions admirably without even getting beyond the proportions of an association. However, they had the temerity to christen their hopes by the ambitious title "The Toledo Museum of Art" and it thereupon became incumbent upon them to produce at once a result to justify the name.

Quarters were therefore rented where transient exhibits could be held. These were secured in a down-town office building. Good exhibitions were arranged and were paid for by the annual dues of members, the receipts from admission on pay days, profits on catalogues and commissions on sales of paintings. Those who could afford it paid admission or

were otherwise called upon for support. Those who could not afford it, or who felt that they could not, were invited to attend free days, not only the adults of the town, but the children of the schools. The museum at once became an active part of the municipal life, and those who contributed to its support felt that satisfaction which is the reward of giving to their fellow men. Before long the museum was established in a large old-fashioned private house, the upper floors of which were converted into very passable galleries. The lower floors were used for offices, class rooms and for the exhibition of such objects as could be shown advantageously in a side light.

After several years of existence the museum had still no permanent collection. Good transient exhibits were hung during the fall, winter and spring months, and explanatory talks were given daily in the galleries. Some days



WRITING A LETTER

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T. W. DEWING

five or six were necessary; these were advertised and were given if only one or two were present. Many times the director talked to but one person who had braved the snow or rain of the day. Arrangements were made with the schools whereby groups of pupils came daily to the museum. Talks were given in the factories at noon on art and travel subjects, and workers were invited to come to the museum on free days. Wage-earning girls were organized into a business girls' club; society débutantes were brought together for the purpose of studying art history; the older women among the members were organized into study clubs as were the members of the Federation of Women's Clubs of the town. All women who did any original art work were invited to form a society, which society has recently hung in the museum its eleventh annual exhibition and for a decade has had as its mission

the encouragement of young girls who need sympathetic help and association.

Everyone owning a camera was invited to come to the museum for the purpose of organizing a club for the members, many of whom have since gained not only a national but an international reputation. The members brought their prints to the museum for weekly criticism and soon scores of snapshotters were turned into intelligent picture-makers who haunted the exhibitions of paintings for inspiration and instruction.

Special nights were arranged for the employees of department stores, the large factories, church congregations or young people's religious societies. They were given the privilege of holding receptions, serving refreshments, having music and perhaps short talks by their employers, pastors or members of the museum staff.

Young men who desired to draw or



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study were welcomed into clubs. Saturday sketch and life classes were maintained and were taken advantage of by many teachers of the public schools who could not themselves draw, but who were obliged to teach art. Hundreds of children were brought together in free sketch classes and were taught by the various artists of the city. These and many other activities made up for the lack of permanent exhibits in the early years.

As good paintings were from time to time presented to the museum together with casts and other art objects, wings were thrown out on the ground floor to furnish necessary space. A lecture course was inaugurated and an appeal to citizens for art books resulted in the formation of a very useful art reference library.

In 1908 the museum became far too small to accommodate its rapidly growing collections and its manifold activities. The time had come for expansion. Toledo at that time, like other cities, was still in the clutches of a panic, but, as it

was necessary to arrange further growth, President Edward Drummond Libbey offered to give to the museum fifty thousand dollars if a like sum could be raised by public subscription. He was hopeful, but not confident. Notwithstanding the financial stringency the fifty thousand dollars was raised in less than a fortnight by small contributions from less than thirty thousand people in all walks of life, including the children of the public schools whose pennies and nickels filled a bank window. The girls of the factories gave their small earnings and collections were even taken up by the members of the colored churches of the city. This substantial expression of public feeling was contagious and those who had already given generously were encouraged to give still more. Mr. and Mrs. Libbey contributed a beautiful piece of property on which the museum now stands and Mr. Libbey more than doubled his gift, as did the trustees and many of the members. As a result the present classic building was opened free

from debt in January, 1912, the structure and grounds being valued at about half a million dollars.

The building, a white marble structure, has a frontage of two hundred feet and a depth of one hundred and fifty feet. It stands in a stately park of forest oaks, well back from the thoroughfare and is approached by a series of beautiful terraces in which a great pool reflects its eighteen monolithic columns. The museum is unusually accessible, being situated in the heart of the city, on two car lines and is easily reached from every direction. It is maintained by seventeen hundred members who pay annual dues, ranging from five dollars a year to five hundred dollars, according to classification.

During the year 1912 thirty-four special exhibits were hung on the walls or shown in the sculpture court. Seventy-three per cent of the population of the city visited the museum, which is by far the largest percentage of attendance in any city in the country.

The museum's permanent collections consist of paintings, sculpture, prints, ceramics, Oriental art, Egyptian antiquities and textiles. The various activities as set forth previously have been continued in the new building with such additions as the requirements of each day suggest and demand. The art reference library has grown rapidly in importance and usefulness. An information bureau has been established for the benefit of the schools and the general public. Assistance is given in the preparation of papers, essays and research in connection with the work which is carried on systematically in the schools, the teachers working in close harmony with the museum. Every year there is held in our galleries an exhibition of the art and manual training work of the school children of the town, every child being represented.

It would take much more space than has been allotted to me to enter even superficially into the details of the work of the Toledo Museum of Art. Ours has been a commonsense plan of procedure and much has been without precedent.

Many people do not go to museums because they have never been invited, we have gone out into the highways and byways and extended a welcome. Every exhibit suggests a reason for such a welcoming, a painting by Tanner, for instance, suggests inviting all of the colored people for a free evening. The exhibition of the Scandinavian painters suggests inviting the members of the Scandinavian societies. A religious painting is the excuse for special invitations to church congregations and Sunday Schools.

The local papers of each day bring to our attention countless channels through which to reach individuals and organizations. It may be a convention, the delegates of which are given a special invitation, it may be the notice of the removal to the city of a new factory, in which case its owners are sent literature regarding the museum, invitations to its receptions and lectures and, after a polite lapse of time, a request to become supporting members. A careful perusal and use of the daily papers has always made it possible for the museum to associate itself with all the activities of the town.

In the hemicycle organizations may conduct lectures or exercises of general interest if all who care to come are admitted free. Various musical organizations give afternoon recitals or morning rehearsals if they comply with the same conditions. The latest attempt in the way of a museum activity was the issue of a call by the director to all small boys interested in the collecting of anything under the sun, for the purpose of establishing a clearing house for the exchange of ideas and specimens where boys with interests of any kind may meet with others of like inclinations. The organization is called the Toledo Collectors' League. The boys flock to the meetings by the hundreds four times each month, and the proposition now confronting the staff is how to provide quarters large enough as the league continues to grow.

So it is the museum has with very simple and commonplace methods linked

itself to the lives of all people, young or old, in the city, in one way or another and as a result those who are able to contribute to its support do so freely, because they feel that their money is assisting in building up something of benefit to all people for all time.

The next task will be the establishment of a fund for maintenance and

another for the purchase of works of art, and to arrange for the building of additional galleries, the need of which is imperative. That which has already been accomplished is but the first small step in the creating of not a small museum but of an institution which will one day take its place among the important museums of the world.

SMALL MUSEUMS CONNECTED WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS*

BY FRANK JEWETT MATHER, JR.

MARQUAND PROFESSOR OF ART AND ARCHEOLOGY, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

THE subject of small dependent museums may recall the title of one of Charles Lamb's most delightful essays, "Poor Relations." This such museums often are in a double sense: poor relations of the great museums because of limited staff and budget, and poor relations of their own governing institution because it neglects them. Here I should except such normal and desirable adjuncts to libraries as print departments. They are generally well managed and relatively well supported. Concerning them we are to hear from an authoritative witness, Mr. Frank Weitenkampf. I am thinking of those miscellaneous art collections that accrue casually and chiefly by gift to libraries, historical societies and colleges. Such gifts often represent, not the needs of the institution or community, but the personal taste of the giver, which is frequently capricious and bad. These gifts impose heavy burdens of housing, exhibition, cataloguing and conservation, without providing funds and persons by whom these burdens may be carried. Ordinarily the regular ongoing of the parent institution taxes an inadequate staff to the utmost. Such a staff commonly brings to the museum no special knowledge and

naturally rather little zeal. Under these conditions the little museum, often a single hall, is soon taken for granted by the community, and save for an occasional stranger, completely disregarded. Poor in possessions, poor in directing wit and energy—that is the usual lot of the small dependent museum the world around. What is true of the gallery of a provincial Italian academy will be true of a university gallery in Germany, or a collegiate museum in America.

Because I am aware that it is subject to many exceptions I have not spared the black in my picture of the small dependent museum. And because I work every day in a small university museum, which is as far from being the worst as it is from being the best of its kind, I am emboldened, from that middle point of vantage, both to sound the depths and scale the heights of my theme. Sometimes by a miracle of luck and devotion the small museum works out well. By the generosity of friends of the college, Bowdoin received the Walker Art Gallery, one of Charles McKim's best buildings, fitted with every convenience and luxury save that of ventilation. The artistic heritage of an early donor, Hon. James Bowdoin, provided a rather non-

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